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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on a large-scale project of research and evaluation of a program for disadvantaged minority group students conducted by the Center for Educational Opportunity at the Claremont Colleges. The Program of Special Directed Studies for Transition to College (PSDS), a five-year experimental project, is aimed at providing a four-year, high quality college education for educationally and economically disadvantaged minority group students. Forty students were admitted in 1968 with full financial support. A three-week orientation program tailored their course load to their abilitie s and interests, with adequate and individualized counseling. Two years are allowed to qualify for regular admission with no grades recorded on the permanent transcript during this time. The research intrinsic to the program is for the purposes of: (1) investigating the consequences of special collegiate arrangements; (2) evaluating and accounting for areas of success and failure; (3) making research available locally and nationally; and, (4) providing bases for desirable changes in PSDS and other programs. The research design is a pre-test, post-test control group allowing for analysis of test scores. The multivariate definition of "success" and evaluative measures to be used are included. (Authors/DM)

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Though many colleges have recently begun compensatory educational programs for disadvantaged minority-group students, almost no research reports evaluating such programs have appeared in the literature. The most extensive review of the available literature is by Gordon (1968), and it consists very largely of subjective observations, anecdotal reports, armchair theorizing, and program planning without a basis of empirical data. The present paper reports on a large-scale project of research and evaluation of the Program of Special Directed Studies for Transition to College (PSDS Program). This program is conducted by the Center for Educational Opportunity at the six Claremont Colleges, with William Gann as its director.

The PSDS Program

The PSDS Program is a five-year experimental education project primarily sponsored by a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation. It is aimed at providing a full four-year, high-quality college education for disadvantaged youths who would probably not otherwise have been eligible for admission to most four-year colleges. These youths are mostly Mexican-American and black students from a background of poverty and inadequate elementary and secondary education, and from families having cultural patterns and values which differ from those of the dominant white society.

The program began in September, 1968 when 40 such disadvantaged students were admitted to undergraduate study at the Claremont Colleges with their financial needs being fully met. Careful preparations were made to provide a special three-week orientation period for them before the college semester began in order to tailor carefully their specific courses and overall course load to their abilities, interests, and levels of preparation, and to make available continuing personal and academic counseling specifically suited to their individual needs and problems. Each student knew that he or she had as long as two years, if he needed it, to show by his performance that he could qualify as a regular student in one of the Claremont Colleges. As long as he is in the Program, no record of grades is kept on his permanent transcript.

The Research and Evaluation Program -- Goals and Rationals

A research and evaluation program has been planned as an intrinsic part of this experimental educational project for several important purposes:

(1) to provide one of the first opportunities for sustained research into the consequences of special collegiate arrangements for the education of poor minority-group students.

(2) to evaluate areas of success and failure of the program and to determine reasons for these successes and failures.

(3) to make research information available both locally and to many of the interested individuals and institutions throughout the nation, and

(4) to provide a basis for informed decisions concerning desirable modifications and improvements in the PSDS program as it develops and changes, and in similar programs elsewhere.

The general research plan was a pre-test and post-test, control-group design so as to allow for an analysis of changes in test scores during the school year as well as a comparison of initial scores and changes with those of other students. Two control groups were used. One a randomly selected group of 40 non-minority group freshmen at the Claremont Colleges, the other a randomly selected group of 20 minority-group freshmen who were not in the PSDS program. This design allowed the PSDS students to be compared not only to average Claremont Colleges students, but also to other minority group students who had ostensibly more adequate backgrounds for college work.

The pre-test battery included: (a) questionnaire measures of demographic variables, family background, and attitudes toward college and the PSDS program, (b) a variety of standardized and experimental

measures of personality and motivational variables such as self-esteem, social adjustment, interests, expectations, and values. Most of these measures were repeated in the post-test, except for ones which were not expected to have changed during the year.

The rationale of the research and evaluation program was to collect information pertinent to five major areas of interest:

(1) Description of the PSDS students on demographic variables and on attitudinal, intellectual, personality, and motivational measures; as a part of this analysis, comparison of PSDS and non-PSDS students was planned.

(2) Changes in PSDS students during the program, and factors associated with those changes, some of which may be causal in nature; again, comparison of PSDS and non-PSDS students was planned.

(3) Factors associated with success in the PSDS program, using a multivariate approach to the definition of "success"; again it was hoped that some of the relationships found would be causal in nature, and again a comparison of PSDS and non-PSDS students was planned.

(4) Reactions to the PSDS students and program by the college community, as an indication of the broader effects of the program on the whole community.

(5) Eventually it is hoped to assess effects of the PSDS program on the students' family and home community, in order to see whether there is any generalization of the impact of the program to siblings, other family members and friends.

At present there are available only very preliminary analyses of some aspects of the first three aims mentioned above. A series of further reports will be available in the future and may be obtained by writing the Center for Educational Opportunity at the Claremont Colleges.

Measures

The multivariate definition of success in the PSDS program referred to above included consideration of the following measures:

(1) GPA (first semester, and first-year)

(2) placement as a regular student in one of the Claremont Colleges

(3) acceptance as a regular student in other accredited four-year colleges

(4) external judgments of success in the program (by faculty members)

(5) subjective judgment of success in the program (by self-rating)

(6) subjective judgment of having reached own academic goals

(7) increase in self-esteem

(8) making a definite career choice and taking steps to act on it

(9) social participation on campus

(10) popularity on campus

(11) leadership in campus organizations

In addition to the questionnaire on demographic variables, family background, and attitudes and the 1 1/2 hour semi-structured interview referred to above, all students in the experimental and control groups were asked to keep a daily diary for the first six weeks of school, focusing on the best and worst things that happened to them each day. The objective measures administered by the research staff included the following:

(1) Adjective Rating List (Kehas), answered for real self and ideal self

(2) Academic achievement motivation measure (Greene & Farquhar)

(3) Mooney Problem Checklist

(4) School and College Ability Test (SCAT)

(5) California Test of Mental Maturity (CTMM)

(6) Cattell Culture-Fair IQ Test

(7) Environmental Participation Index (Mathis)

(8) College and University Environment Scale (Pace)

(9) Strong Vocational Interest Blank (SVIB)

(10) Semantic Differential (Osgood) on self-esteem and social perception

(11) Omnibus Personality Inventory (OPI)

(12) Personal Feelings Questionnaire (Janis & Field, a Measure of Self-esteem)

(13) Internal/External Control of Reinforcement Scale (Rotter)

(14) Q-Sort on Values (Smith, Block, & Haan)

(15) Cognitive style measure (Hess & Shipman)

(16) Questionnaire on middle-class values (Friedlander & Seric)

(17) Sigel Sorting Task (measure of cognitive functioning on several dimensions)

(18) Adaptation of Kohlberg's moral-judgement classification (Smith, Block, & Haan)